

Mailbag for February 25th Adoption Committee Meeting

Please make sure to include this analysis of discovery based math in your investigation of which textbook to choose for my property's city over the next ten years. Although my children have been the sorry recipients of the terrible math taught in Bellevue's schools in the last decade, perhaps I will not have to continue to pay taxes to fund garbage education. That gives me an idea... perhaps I should sue the BSD for damages to pay for the re-education of my children in mathematics?

<http://media.bonnint.net/seattle/3/347/34719.pdf>

I cannot attend the math forum meeting on February 24th. I am a computer scientist, logician, and grandparent of prospective students in Bellevue. Until recently I was, for some 5 or 6 years, a volunteer math tutor for underprivileged elementary-school students. I personally abhor the discovering method - I teach math as a language - but I realize that is not compelling. Mere citizens are at a loss to analyze news reports and asses conflicting experts. I do find it compelling that the WA OSPI found the Discovering Algebra-Geometry series to be mathematically unsound. What a relief that the Math Adoption Forum and other groups are pulling together the evidence and organizing it. Given your work, as well as the alarming data on math performance in Bellevue and Seattle, and the results of the recent court case in Seattle, the math adoption committee will open itself to serious questions of competence and possibly conflict of interest, as to why they would choose that path in the face of strong evidence against it.

I understand the importance and utility of mathematical competence, since I have a Doctorate in Nuclear Physics. More importantly, I have two marvelous grandchildren in Bellevue schools.

I plan to attend the Math Information night Wed., Feb. 24. I have read with great interest the newspaper articles about the controversy over the Holt vs. Discovery math programs. This controversy seems to be a repeat of the age-old dispute between the merits of drill for procedural skills vs. learning concepts. The Bellevue School District website gives references showing that current mathematics teaching theory incorporates a synthesis of these two approaches plus additional skills.

Hence, I have looked over the respective course materials at the Bellevue High School Library. It appears that the Holt program emphasizes procedures, with appropriate examples, while the Discovery program emphasizes conceptual understanding and provides interesting applications. The Holt material available for review consisted of the textbooks only. The material available to review for the Discovery program had substantial supplemental resources. Both programs seem to have a reasonable balance in their approaches, and both appear to me to provide an excellent learning environment. However, in my experience, first learning a concept provides the motivation to delve into the details of the computational procedures. The Holt program is likely to be most effective with students who are predisposed to work through the material. The Discovery program is likely to help students become involved in mathematics as having interesting applications.

In conclusion, I favor the Discovery program.

My son is a 5th grader at Bennett Elementary and is on his 3rd Math Program. He is currently using Math Expressions which has worked the best for him. He has strong math skills but his reading skills are below average. Math Expressions has a good balance of both and the problems that are word problems are very straight forward. My daughter is in 1st grade and has had 2 years of Math Expressions and I have enjoyed working with her on this curriculum. I struggled endlessly trying to help my son from K – the first part of 3rd grade using the Terc curriculum.

I am in strongly in favor of the Holt Curriculum. I also came across this article which outlines some strong feedback on these two very different types of approaches to teaching our kids math.

http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/opinion/2003708118_rams16.html

Hi,

My name is *** and I am a parent of a senior and two sophomores (twins) at the International School in the Bellevue School District. I understand that the District is in the process of selecting which math textbooks/curriculum to use. I am unable to attend the community math meeting that will be held on Wednesday, February 24, and understand that there would be feedback forms there. In lieu of the feedback form, I am sending you this e-mail.

I have been frustrated with the math curriculum since my kids have been in elementary school. Because of the lack of textbooks and focus on computation during their elementary school years, I had each of my three kids attend Kumon math while they were in grades 1-5. In my opinion, this supplementary experience gave them the computational background that was severely lacking in their day-to-day math work in the classroom. This cost our family approximately \$900/year.

In looking at their middle school and high school experiences (my senior is in AP Calculus currently), I have been frustrated with the textbooks they have used. The frustration comes from the layout of the textbooks (or in some cases they have been workbooks). I believe a quality textbook clearly explains the concept, followed by examples, then followed by the homework problems. The textbook of course is supplemented with the lecture from the math teacher. What I see in the textbooks they have used is the concepts are vaguely defined and then the homework problems follow. How is a child expected to do the homework problems when the textbook doesn't even give solid examples?

In making your curriculum decision, I hope you consider the feedback of parents in the District. More focus needs to be placed on computation during the elementary school years and higher quality textbooks in their middle and high school years.

Thanks in advance for your consideration.

To: Math Adoption Committee

I am not sure where the committee is in the adoption process. Hopefully you are still reading comments.

My daughter, a freshman, was a participant in the pilot program for the Holt and Discovery series. I reviewed these trial chapters carefully as she went through them and I filled out the evaluation forms. Both Holt and Discovery texts were immensely better for my daughter than the Core-Plus text. The answers to some questions in the evaluation forms may be misleading. I think many students will benefit greatly from a text that gives them the resources to go back and review key definitions, mathematical terms, equations and clear example problems. If parents said that their children did not refer back to the text often when doing homework and preparing for tests, it may be primarily because they have never had a math text that provided any support out of the classroom. It took my daughter some time to recognize that she could go back and review on her own, that she had this option rather than seeking help from parents. As a parent, I could also offer much better support with text material to refer back to. I do not think that having this information available in a text is only a support for 'struggling students'. I think all will benefit. Many of even the best students have had to supplement their math studies with other math programs beyond the curriculum at school.

I believe that Holt would be the best series to adopt because of the clear instruction and reference material it offers. Will students in 10th, 11th and 12th grades also benefit from a new math text series?

Thanks to all on the committee who have worked many hours on this process.

As an elementary teacher who understands the value of math education, I wanted to weigh in on this important upcoming decision. As you may know, the BSD elementary schools are in our second year of using the Math Expressions curriculum. One of the qualities I really appreciate about Math Expressions is how it integrates time for exploring mathematical concepts with a chance for students to build their knowledge and understanding of algorithms and basic math facts (addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division). This flexibility within the curriculum benefits all students, no matter what their mathematical background.

From what I have seen of both curricula, the Discovering curriculum would best provide this same flexibility. I feel that the students will benefit from a similar approach in teaching, understanding, and applying their learning. I would be disappointed if students moved on in 8th grade to use a less exploratory approach to math. I worry that with Holt, math would become a set of formulas to memorize. Without a solid understand of why and how math works, I know my students would have a difficult time knowing how to approach math problems. I believe that Discovering curriculum helps students to understanding the why and how. If they know why it works, they know when to use it. Holt does not seem to provide this context and I fear that students might learn formulas, but they would not when to use them.

I urge you to continue using a flexible, exploratory approach to teaching math by choosing the Discovering curriculum!

Key Curriculum Press, the publishers of the Discovering series, have put up a web page addressing the Seattle lawsuit and providing information about the Discovering mathematics program. Included on the site are letters of support from independent university level mathematicians and mathematics educators that address the effectiveness and research basis of the program with references cited. www.keypress.com/seattle

Take a look at this web site (<http://cliffmass.blogspot.com/2010/01/how-good-are-uw-students-in-math.html>) and you'll see what you are up against. Thank God the good professor did not ask them about the Fundamental Theorem of Calculus. The level of mathematics knowledge of our High School graduates appears to be at rock bottom. Moreover, what does this say about the level of mathematics teaching in Washington? It may be tough to get into the Univ. of Washington but apparently you don't need to know much to get out with a Degree, which BTW does NOT substitute for an education.

Greetings,

I am the mother of a senior at Newport HS. Our son has had his entire education in the Bellevue School district, and for the most part it has been excellent. The one issue I wish I had known about earlier is our math program. Because I was working full time I didn't understand how many of my fellow parents were enrolling their children in KUMON. We started in 3rd grade, to supplement the current math lessons, as they offered far too little in the way of drills. The learning was too much words and not enough repetition.

Our son overcame his "I am not good at math" with the help of both KUMON and then the use of a tutor for the High school program. He has taken math every year, has used a tutor to explain the lessons in 10th and 11th grade. The tutor we found has taught in the area (Mercer Island) and confirmed with us that the current texts do not build a strong foundation. I wonder about the kids whose parents can't afford or don't hire a tutor? I am hopeful that your next choice in curriculum will not require so much outside help.

Dear Math Adoption Committee,

Our family has been in the Bellevue School District by choice for all of our children's school years. Our daughter is now 21 (at WWU) and our son will be graduating from Newport High School this June. I am writing today to help other students younger than my own. I have been extremely frustrated with the weak math curriculum in our district.

My husband and I both utilize math in our professional lives and have been very disappointed in the BSD math curriculum starting in elementary school. When our children did not know their math addition/subtraction tables we worked with them at nights with flash cards to bolster the weak curriculum. When they did not memorize their multiplication tables we utilized Kumon to supplement the fundamentals they were not getting. In middle school we hired tutors and used Sylvan Learning Center. Now in high school we are using private tutors again because students are frustrated with 'discovery' and give up.

I write to you tonight as I believe that BSD is making the wrong choice to help our students compete in a global market. When our daughter went to the University of British Columbia in Vancouver Canada she was behind other students and had to retake her math classes. She was a Governors scholar and had a 3.85 GPA but our math is not on par with other schools or other countries.

We can do better and I urge the BSD to reject the "Discovery" method and find a solution that builds a strong foundation for success for all students.

Please do not adopt the Discovery math curriculum. The State board of Education does not recommend this curriculum and has called it Mathematically unsound. Why would you want to subject our children to something the State board has found to be unsound?

For the future of our children, please adopt the Holt curriculum. Traditional math has gone a long way and taught a lot of children to be proficient in math - please maintain that standard by adopting the Holt curriculum.

Please select the Holt Series for Bellevue School District Math. I am AGAINST the Discovering Series.

To whom it may concern:

I am a concerned parent that was planning on attending the math information night this past Monday regarding the two choices of math curriculum. Since the meeting was cancelled I want to make sure that my opinion is known to the math committee and the Bellevue School Board. Based on the following facts, the Discovering series should not be chosen:

The State Board of Education found the *Discovering* series to be mathematically unsound and the Superintendent of Public Instruction subsequently recommended only the *Holt* series, saying that it is the curriculum that most closely adheres to our new state math standards.

This district is FAILING OUR KIDS by continuing this poor math curriculum! Please choose Holt!

To the Math Adoption Committee,

As a taxpayer and citizen of Bellevue, and as the parent of an 8th grade student, I ask that you NOT recommend adoption of the Discovery Math series for Bellevue public schools, but rather choose the Holt math series as the next math textbooks for Bellevue students.

I ask that you take into account that:

1. The State Board of Education has found the Discovery series to be mathematically unsound
2. Randy Dorn, the Superintendent of Public Instruction has recommended only the *Holt* series, saying that it is the curriculum that most closely adheres to our new state math standards
3. The Discovery series is considered by university math professors and professionals to be inadequate for preparation for college level math.

As I have earned undergraduate and graduate degrees in business administration, I directly understand the need for adequate math preparation prior to university level coursework.

I find it stunning that Bellevue continues to consider the Discovery series, after both the State Board of Education and the Superintendent of Public Instruction have determined it is inadequate and inappropriate for math education in Washington.

These are our children's futures at stake. Please do not dig your heels in and ignore the facts. This is not a turf war. Parents really do expect the district to do what is best for our students, our children, and in this instance, reason has not prevailed.

To All Concerned,

After spending thousands of dollars having 3 children tutored in math, I am appalled at the lack of intelligence that the Seattle Public Schools are displaying in ignoring ALL the evidence that the Discovering Math program is absolutely "fuzzy math" that is harming our children's future in this field of study.

Dear Members of the Math Adoption Committee,

I am a parent with two children in the Bellevue School District. I attended the November 16th information meeting at Newport High School. I left feeling very concerned about the Committee's seemingly defensive posture toward considering the Discovering Math Curriculum even though it was found to be mathematically unsound. I arrived at the meeting knowing little about the matter as my oldest just entered Tye, and prior to the information meeting I had assumed the District was leaning toward adopting more traditional math methods (as I am so much happier with the math education my 3rd grader now receives in terms of learning standard algorithms).

Now, with the successful lawsuit against the Seattle School District for its adoption of Discovering, I will be outraged if BSD does not drop Discovering like a hot potato. I don't care how much bureaucratic work has been done in arriving at Discovering as a viable option - it is not. Parents in Bellevue do not want a mathematically unsound math curriculum and taxpayers do not want to fund math backs the District will inevitably be sued over. If the logical and sane approach of dropping Discovering is not pursued by this Committee, there will be a backlash by parents and taxpayers.

Hello BSD405,

I heard that our may be interested in BSD residents input about Math.

Please consider the following.

I have a great worry about the level of Math preparation in the BSD!

My Math education took place many years ago in a different country.

The difference between my kids experience and mine are day and night.

My kids have no frustration, no tears, no struggle to understand the curricula. They usually get 3s and 4s in Math with little effort.

But, does it mean it is a good program? Does it prepare them for life?

Do we reduce the "standard" of walking and running to mere crawling to avoid pain and frustration of toddlers who learn to walk?

Do we eliminate bikes and rollerblades because one might fracture a bone using them?

Do we take away trees so kids won't climb on them because they might fall?

How comes we brought the math standards, expectation and teaching to a level which proves to fall behind the ever exceeding needs of society?

Why are the math skills presented by our students fall behind many other nations', some are far poorer than us?

Finally, why does the BSD require every high school student to get a \$100 TI calculator, whereas equivalent alternatives cost a fraction (\$40 for instance)?

Note also that calculators are not conducive for higher math level. If relied upon, they have negative contribution.

Please read:

http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/editorials/2010995832_edit08mathbooks.html

Dear Bellevue Curriculum Adoption Committee,

Below is a plain text transcription of the Superior Court findings about the Seattle School Board's selection of Discovering. As you can see, you should thoroughly consider all relevant information before you make your recommendation to the School Board or their decision

might be considered arbitrary or capricious. Consider that your web

site and your presentations to the public gloss over findings 2c (the report from the SBE finding Discovering to be mathematically unsound) and 2e (that OSPI recommended only Holt and not Discovering). You should also make sure you consider the data about achievement gaps such as finding 2g and the relevant data about the remediation rates for students entering college. There are people in the Seattle area who are skilled and knowledgeable about these issues. Have you made an honest effort to invite these people to speak with your committee?

The Honorable Julie Spector

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON IN AND FOR KING COUNTY No. 09-2-21771-8 SEA FINDINGS OF FACT, CONCLUSION OF LAW, AND ORDER

THIS MATTER having come on for hearing, and the Court having consider the pleadings, administrative record, and argument in this matter, the Court hereby enters the following Findings of Fact, Conclusions of Law, and Order:

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. On May 6, 2009, in a 4-3 vote, the Seattle School District Board of Directors chose the Discovering Series as the District's high school basic math materials.
2. In making its decision the Board considered:
 - a. A recommendation from the District's Selection Committee;
 - b. A January, 2009 report from the Washington State Office of Public Instruction ranking High School math textbooks, listing a series by Holt Company as number one, and the Discovering Series as number two;
 - c. A March 11, 2009 report from the Washington State Board of Education finding that the Discovering Series was "mathematically unsound";
 - d. An April 8, 2009 School Board Action Report authored by the Superintendent;

- e. The May 6, 2009 recommendation of the OSPI recommending only the Holt Series, and not recommending the Discovery Series;
- f. WASL score showing an achievement gap between racial groups;
- g. WASL scores from an experiment with a different inquiry-based math text at Cleveland and Garfield High Schools, showing that WASL scores overall declined using the inquiry-based math texts, and dropped significantly for English Language Learners, including a 0% pass rate at one high school;
- h. The National Math Achievement Panel (NMAP) Report;
- i. Citizen comments and expert reports criticizing the effectiveness of inquiry-based math and the Discovering Series;
- j. Parent reports of difficulty teaching their children using the Discovering Series and inquiry-based math;
- k. Other evidence in the Administrative Record;
- l. One Board member also considered the ability of her own child to learn math using the Discovery Series.

- 3. The court finds that the Discovery Series is an inquiry-based math program.
- 4. The court finds, based upon a review of the entire administrative record, that there is insufficient evidence for any reasonable Board member to approve the selection of the Discovering Series.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

- 1. The court has jurisdiction under RCW 28A.645.010 to evaluate the Board's decision for whether it is arbitrary, capricious, or contrary to law;
- 2. The Board's selection of the Discovery Series was arbitrary;
- 3. The Board's selection of the Discovery Series was capricious;
- 4. This court has the authority to remand the Board's decision for further review;
- 5. Any Conclusion of Law which is more appropriately characterized as a Finding of Fact is adopted as such, and any Finding of Fact more appropriately characterized as a Conclusion of Law is adopted as such.

ORDER

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED:

The decision of the Board to adopt the Discovery Series is remanded for further proceedings consistent with this opinion.
Dated this 4th of February, 2010

THE HONORABLE JULIE SPECTOR
KING COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT JUDGE

Hi, I read with interest that the Bellevue School District is considering the Discovery and Holt math programs. I moved to Bellevue from Redmond almost two years ago in part to get my daughter into the Bellevue district. One of my and my wife's biggest concerns was the Discovery math program in the Lake Washington School district. We found it abysmal and have augmented our older childrens' math learning with expensive Kumon classes just to help them learn the basics better. The Discovery math workbooks did a poor job of explaining how to solve problems and worse the children developed a poor number sense.

Dear Committee Members,

I am the parent of a second-grader at Cherry Crest Elementary School. As such, I am very concerned about your adoption process in regards to secondary mathematics texts.

I would draw your attention to the decision yesterday in King County Superior Court. Judge Spector called the Seattle School District's decision to adopt "Discovering Math" as its curriculum "capricious." That's after the district went through what they believed to be a rigorous process of evaluating and adopting the program.

The judge noted that the state, in the form of the State Board of Education and the Superintendent of Public Instruction, has labeled "Discovering Math" as mathematically unsound. "Holt" has been identified by the state as the curriculum that most closely adheres to our new state math standards. In my capacity as a broadcaster (I work at News/Talk 97.3 KIRO FM,) I have personally interviewed the spokesman for the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Randy Dorn. He confirmed the above to be accurate and true.

The judge also upheld the plaintiff's claim that "Discovering Math" harms minority students, particularly those who speak English as a second language.

Given the results of this case, I would encourage you to reconsider including "Discovering Math" in your pilot program. If it is adopted by the district, it is quite possible that a lawsuit will be filed against it. After yesterday's decision, it would seem likely that a superior court judge would again find against the adoption of "Discovering Math."

Please strongly consider rejecting this flawed curriculum. "Holt" has now been found to be superior by both the state and the courts. It certainly would save the Bellevue School District time and money if you rejected "Discovering Math" and embraced "Holt." All indications are, also, that all of our students would be far better served by that decision.

Many of us are wondering how this decision will impact Bellevue's decisions.

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http://www.seattlepi.com/local/415049_math04.html

Judge rejects Seattle's high school math program

By [SCOTT SUNDE](#)

SEATTLEPI.COM

Seattle's so-called "Discovery" math curriculum doesn't add up for a King County Superior Court judge, who rejected the style of instruction Thursday and ordered the district to try again.

Last May, the School board implemented a district-wide math curriculum called Discovering Math. The curriculum was part of a five-year strategic plan that Superintendent Dr. Maria Goodloe-Johnson created.

But Judge Julie Spector ruled Thursday that the board's decision to use the Discovering series was arbitrary and capricious. She ordered the board to reconsider the matter.

"The court find, based upon a review of the entire administrative record, that there is insufficient evidence for any reasonable member to approve selection of the Discovering series."

In a statement the district said it would likely appeal the ruling.

"This is a very surprising decision, and the District is now evaluating its next steps. Seattle Public Schools followed an extensive process in adopting these materials, which were thoroughly vetted by a diverse group including mathematicians and teaching professionals," said spokeswoman Patti Spencer.

In June, two parents and a University of Washington professor went to King County Superior Court to overturn the School Board's decision and force the district to consider other textbook options.

They argued that the curriculum would do harm, not good by widening the achievement gap between middle-class and underprivileged students.

In her ruling, Spector noted that the state's Board of Education had declared the curriculum "mathematically unsound" and that the state Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction did not recommend the curriculum.

And she said WASL schools from a similar inquiry-based math at Cleveland and Garfield High Schools showed that test scores declined and dropped significantly for students who were learning English, including a 0 percent pass rate at one school.

The Discovery series textbooks started appearing in classrooms across the country in 2007.

According to Key Curriculum Press, the books' publisher, the series was designed to help teachers reach students with different abilities by using "investigations." These investigations are designed to give students the opportunity to work together to solve problems.

Some of the texts included in the series are "Discovering Algebra," "Discovering Geometry" and "Discovering PreCalculus."

Those suing to stop Discovering Math in court were Martha McLaren, a retired Seattle high-school math teacher; Cliff Mass, a professor of atmospheric science at the University of Washington; and Da-Zanne Porter, mother of a Cleveland High School student. Mass, a well-known local meteorologist, has said college students' math abilities have been decreasing over the past 10 years.

"I was absolutely delighted and excited," Mass said of the ruling. He hoped the district wouldn't appeal the decision.

"I think it would be really sad if they did that. I'm hoping the school board will stop them," he said, adding there are several good math textbooks the district could use in place of the series he objects to.

Members of the Adoption Committee:

My email of January 22 noted that Seattle was being sued over its adoption of *Discovering*. Judge Spector's decision was handed down earlier today. I'm sure that you will hear about it from other sources, but wanted to bring it to your immediate attention.

Please don't recommend that Bellevue repeat Seattle's mistake.

As a parent of a sophomore and a 6th grader, I have watching the adoption process over the last several months. I was able view the *Discovering* and Holt books and wanted to provide feedback but was not able to fill out a survey as the hours for completing the survey at our local high school library were very limited and did not fit my schedule.

When I compared the curricula under consideration, I found the Holt series to be stronger. In Holt, the units were better organized, had better examples and did a better job of breaking down complicated concept into understandable building blocks. *Discovering* was closer to CMP than Holt with more verbage, less instruction, fewer examples. My sophomore participated in the pilot program at NHS and was very vocal in her praise of the Holt unit she used. In her words, 'way fewer words, good examples, understandable problems.' She was frustrated when the pilot ended and they had to go back to the old math curriculum.

I understand that the State Board of Education recommends Holt and has found *Discovering* to be weak. I am amazed that BSD would keep *Discovering* in the running—yet the word on the street is that the decision to adopt *Discovering* was made many months ago and this whole process of gathering community input is a charade. I give you my input nonetheless and time will tell.

Hi again,

Your website includes several references to published research that presumably is being considered as you evaluate the high school math text alternatives. They do not include the following, which are directly relevant to the problem you have been tasked to address:

Kirschner P, Sweller J, Clark R, "Why Minimal Guidance During Instruction Does Not Work: An Analysis of the Failure of Constructivist, Discovery, Problem-Based, Experiential, and Inquiry-Based Teaching", *Educational Psychologist*, 41(2), 75–86, 2006, Lawrence Erlbaum. (can be found at: http://www.cogtech.usc.edu/publications/kirschner_Sweller_Clark.pdf)

Willingham, D. T., "Why Don't Students Like School: A Cognitive Scientist Answers Questions About How the Mind Works and What It Means for the Classroom", 2009, ISBN: 0470279303

Hattie J., "Visible Learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement", Routledge, Dec., 2008, ISBN: 0415476186.

All of these references warrant your attention. The first article is readily accessible and, since there is not much time left before you must forward your recommendation, warrants immediate consideration by the adoption committee.

Math Adoption Committee,

I am contacting you with two concerns I have.

1) Parent are not getting the information about when the meetings for math adoption are being held. I have two students in the Bellevue School District, one in Middle and one in High School. Both schools have weekly emails to parents. None of the emails contain information about math adoption or any meeting times. The BSD405 home page does not list the the next meeting, on Monday. **I can't even find the Monday meeting listed on your home page or on the information nights page!!!!** The only way I know about the up coming Monday meeting, or past meetings, is that I was at a PTSA meeting and a paper flyer was handed out at the end of the meeting. Wow !!!

2) The parents of Middle school students are the one who are most affected by the math change. Yet, the hard copy and survey of the two curriculums being considered were at the High School libraries. These should have been at the Middle school libraries where the parents who are most interested and most affected had easy access.

Parents want to be involved and informed. If we don't know when the meeting are or if the information is to hard to to access they won't be.

Hi again Steve -

I finally tracked down that my son did receive the survey and just failed to bring it home. He talked to his math teacher and was told it is too late. Is that true? There is no way that we could do a survey at this point?

I am rather frustrated by this, since I am sure that we are not the only family where this has occurred. I may, however, be one of the few parents who thought to ask, albeit apparently too late. I do not think this avenue of gathering input is inclusive of the parent perspective, it seems very hit or miss. The teachers and schools have email addresses for guardians of the majority of the students. If the district did not want the expense of a postal mailing this could have been communicated electronically for free - would not have even needed to print anything.

Now I find myself feeling annoyed with my son - and I think that is somewhat unfair to him. While I know he should have been responsible enough to bring home the material. I am also fully aware it wasn't really his job to handle the district's communications - especially about something that might have impact on such an important decision facing the district.

Respectfully

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P.S. I have included the mathadoption alias on this since I was unaware if our correspondence had been shared with the rest of the committee, and I feel this issue of survey respondents should be shared.

Dear Math Adoption committee,

I read in the postings at Tillicum about the PTSA sponsored informational night at the International School. Thank you for another opportunity to hear how the process is going and allowing for questions by parents.

From a parent standpoint, I am concerned about what resources are available if my kids (and others) aren't understanding the math instruction. I was wondering if you could address the question of the pros and cons of each curriculum has related to the resources the kids and parents would have available should they not understand the concept and problems being presented during classroom time. (Or if the kids just need reinforcement of a topic.) In addition, wondering what the district might envision doing outside of the curriculum (videos via the curriculum web or teacher websites) to support each curriculum.

I am familiar with the Holt Curriculum and their videos and online support, but I am not familiar with the Discovery Curriculum. From what I could tell from the brief review that I did at Newport library, I did not see any online resources with the Discovery Curriculum, which isn't to say it doesn't exist. Is there online support for the Discovery Curriculum? And I am wondering if the Holt and Discovery test piloted classrooms used the videos and online help and if the teachers, students and parents found it to be helpful.

With class sizes increasing with the continued budget cuts that are coming from the state (i.e. we are seeing class sizes of 700 at the UW), the time to help each individual student from teachers is in short supply. While I am sure the differentiated learning plans that the district is moving towards will help the situation, as a parent, I am looking for information to support my children at home either through the curriculum itself (as Holt does), or online through the curriculum web that is standardized across the district, not just related to an individual teacher's web site.

I also feel the student population needs an introduction on how to maneuver the online system of class support, as they are obviously going to have to at the large universities in our country.

Hello and thank you for your service on the committee charged with selecting the new math textbooks for our high school students in the Bellevue School District.

Last December, I took about an hour and a half and reviewed the texts, Discovering and Holt. Truthfully, the comparison process wasn't anything like I expected. First, I looked through one text and then another and realized the texts present two very different approaches to teaching and mastering math. I finally decided the most logical approach would be to compare specific sections or topics of one text to that same section in the other text. In reality, even this proved to be challenging.

My summary review is as follows:

HOLT

I preferred this text overall and favored the examples listed in the text, as well as the section overview. I found the "Who Uses This?" to be less wordy and more concrete real-world examples. I liked that there were lots of practice problems. And I liked the examples followed by "Try This." I was impressed by the test preparation and overall conciseness of the examples and problems.

DISCOVERING

The instructions to teachers appeared to be quite verbally intensive, almost scripted. I found this text to be way too wordy for my liking - I got bored with the verbage before I even got to the problems. In the sections I tried to compare, there didn't seem to be as many problems for the students to work through.

As a parent, at home trying to help my student in the evening, I imagined HOLT would be more helpful than DISCOVERING. I liked the steps to work the problem and found the explanations easier to understand because they were less wordy. This is a huge factor for me. Although I did well in high school and college math, 25+ years of not being challenged by higher level math problems has left my skills more than a little rusty. I feel completely helpless regarding homework needs related to the current math program and would have benefited more than once if I'd had a text to refer to for help.

My vote is for HOLT.

To: Math Adoption Committee, or to whom it may concern

From: ***

Hello-

My name is ***, currently a freshman attending Newport High School.

I've watched both my sisters struggle, and somehow survive, through the Bellevue School District years before me.

And I've been dreading knowing that 'my turn' was soon to come, and now here I am, writing you this letter.

I recently read through 22 letters in the "mailbag" for 1.28.10, only one of which supported the Discovery math program. And that one just happened to be the front of the packet. Is it not obvious that the district seems to be making a mistake?

Has anyone asked the students? The saying of 'children are the future' is not just a theory. Sure, you've given us these surveys, that have... what, not even 10 questions on them. I recently filled out my third scantron survey regarding math pilots, and after reading through the same questions, I'm not sure how anything can be settled by seeing the results from those questions. What they ask on those surveys are insignificant to choosing a curriculum.

I keep rereading what I write, and erasing what I'm trying to say. Anyone who has ever written a letter like this knows that they always want to perfectly word something, or get the point across the right way... Well. I can't think of anything, honestly. Except for the facts. Holt has made a picture perfect book. There's plenty of practice, and plenty of perfectly laid out examples. There are word problems, and definitions... Instead of trying to word this out, I'll let you read it for yourself. Here are word-for-word notes I took from our class discussion earlier this week...

Discovery:

- **Work is rushed**
- **Stories in book are irrelevant**
- **Group reading DOES NOT WORK, nothing comes from it**
- **Investigations didn't prepare for problems/tests**
- **Confusing**
- **Examples aren't straight forward**

Holt:

- **Examples, very helpful**
- **More time to work through problems**
- **Tells you what you need to know, nothing's hidden**

- Online materials were extremely helpful
- More engaging
- Less group work is good, but still opportunities to work together so the district will be happy

"Holt is the book that we actually learned stuff from." (***, class all agreed)"ANYTHING is better than Core."

I cannot believe that after all this, there's still a question between which book to use.

We even took a class vote. Keep in mind, students were allowed to vote multiple times.

The first question asked, was who wanted to go back to Core, after piloting these books.

Core: 5

Second, who prefers Discovery over Core?

Discovery: 14

Third, who prefers Holt over both Discovery and Core?

Holt: 20

The data speaks for itself. I guess all I can do now is ask you to listen. And.. beg you not to have us go back to Core.

Also- It might interest you to visit this website... <http://bsd405student.blogspot.com/>

Hello, my name is *** and I am a Freshman at Newport High School.

In the past few months in our math classes, we've been piloting different books, including Holt, Discovery, and Core.

Personally, I found Holt to be the most helpful due to the many practice problems, and examples.

Our class as a whole found that Holt was the most helpful, also.

We took a class survey, and out of the people that voted, 13 people liked Holt, 3 people liked Core, and 3 people liked Discovery.

It seems like there is way too much reading in our math books and not enough "plain old" math.

When I needed help, my parents could do nothing to help because they learned none of it in their school years.

To the Math Adoption Committee,

I have a Bellevue 8th grader and have been enthralled with various aspects of this debate. Particularly, I've looked at what the Math experts recommended to the OSPI. I'd like to tell you from my perspective considering what I've encountered personally.

As a new parent in the school district 8 years ago, I started helping out in the class. My children went to a private kindergarten where they learned phonetics, columnar addition, etc. By the time they left Kindergarten they could add simple 4 digit numbers. At the end of the year at their graduation, the students were asked how large a number they would like to read in front of the parents. So, most children picked in the 100,000's. One picked in the billions. My point is that place value was easily recognized. Then in public school, second grade started the horizontal addition. My oldest child was required to reverse the traditional skills and learn to bracket the ten's and the one's, then carry the equation down to the next line and add remaining values horizontally. This was the curriculum and the teachers were not allowed to vary. By the time they got to the higher functions, they were supposed to do this long, time wasting manipulation of numbers to come up with the answer. It took many extra steps with what I called a "horizontal" method.

Now, my child in 8th grade finished a semester. I had no idea he was part of the pilot program for Holt. I knew some schools were piloting, but we weren't informed by the teacher or administration.

You may know if you have children, that sometimes you ask a question, you follow up with a question a month later and at that point the

communication comes together. I asked my son how Math was going.

After all, he had an A* this year. He had not asked for help much, if at all. My son stated that this workbook was different--it had examples of how to solve the problems. Then, I asked if he knew what book he was using. And indeed, it was the Holt series. From my child's perspective, this curriculum (at least for what he was learning in 8th grade Math) taught him the subject in a more affective way.

My younger daughter piloted Math expressions at the beginning of 3rd grade. She's brought homework home nightly that gave her room to practice. I remember when my son in 4th grade brought home the Discovery series workbook, I couldn't believe what they were doing.

They were to waste time counting to 1000. He had learned to do that in Kindergarten. I believe I saved the workbook if anyone is interested in looking at the difference of what my son was learning compared to what my daughter 3 years behind him was learning in the same grade with Math Expressions.

So from a personal stand point of an involved parent with a Science background who works in Medicine, I would like to see the committee adopt the curriculum that was at least satisfactory by the experts who reported to OSPI. I heard educators from University of Washington trying to persuade new teachers that the Discovery method was better for bridging the education gap. This is absolute nonsense. Changing the whole structure of the basic functions of Mathematics does not make sense. We have to believe that the experts know what they're doing.

We hope you will strongly consider the Holt method.

Thanks for serving our community,

I wrote this in response to the KIRO radio website, but feel the comments are pertinent to the adoption discussion of math curriculum for the Bellevue School District.

To say that students using the Discovery math series, or any other investigative process in learning math or science are "self taught" is entirely missing the point of process oriented, guided learning activities. After 30 years of teaching math, from algebra to AP Calculus, and watching students learn, I have observed how much MORE the students learn, if they are guided in their learning, and must think through the processes, rather than have someone tell them everything. Mr. Mass's concerns that students using the Discovery Math series are completely misdirected.

Dear Members of the Committee,

Recently, these documents were sent to me by math teacher Dan Dempsey. He was an active party to the lawsuit challenging 'Discovering Math's' adoption in the Seattle School District.

More importantly, Dan was one of the advisory members who helped the State Board of Education write our new math standards. It was, of course, the same board that labeled 'Discovering' "mathematically unsound." The State Superintendent adopted their characterization. That decision was recently upheld in Superior Court in Thurston County.

Dan's analysis was not only accepted by the judge in the case, but she further ordered that the materials be included for the Seattle school board when it reconsiders the adoption.

He's also taken a look at Bellevue's test results for disadvantaged students and English as a Second Language learners. These results reflect the district's decade-long use of TERC and other reform math texts.

Since you are close to making a recommendation to our board about whether to adopt the Holt curriculum or 'Discovering,' I thought these analyses might be helpful.

My daughter has been working with 'Math Expressions' since last year. As a former elementary and secondary school teacher, I'm delighted with the curriculum and her progress. IMHO, the district did an excellent job by adopting it two years ago.

Thank you again for your hard work for the students and parents of the Bellevue School District.

The Holt Math series should be selected for use in the Bellevue School District (BSD). The method of instruction balances traditional and reform mathematics. The Holt Series more closely aligns with BSD's mission to provide "students a top-of-the-line college preparatory education so that they can enter and succeed in the college or university of their choice." Holt has also been recommended as the top choice by the Washington Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

The Discovering Series, an inquiry-based approach to math instruction, should not be adopted for use in the Bellevue School District. My two children will use the math materials being adopted now and we cannot risk their once-in-a-lifetime chance in high school math on a program that has been deemed "mathematically unsound". My child struggled with the TERC approach to math (inquiry-based) for four years. As a parent, I was deeply concerned that math would always be a difficult and challenging subject for him. (I am responsible for EBITDA targets in excess of 500M dollars at work and a poor foundation in math is never an issue I want my children to face in our ultra-competitive work environment.) This all changed with the introduction of the Math Expressions curriculum which uses a more traditional math approach. Math is now one of his best subjects – he is truly thriving: understanding, gaining proficiency, and enjoying math. The Holt series is a more logical choice to build on the success of Math Expressions.

On a purely practical note, the Discovering Series does not have the recommendation of the OSPI and it is embroiled in controversy. At considerable expense, the San Diego School District removed Discovering after only a few years of use. After losing in court,

Seattle Public Schools must now decide whether to appeal and/or remove Discovering from their schools – all incurring expense they cannot afford. BSD should not consider the Discovering Series until Key Curriculum Press has adequately addressed and corrected the finding of “mathematically unsound.” Until then, BSD would be inviting similar controversy and have to use precious financial resources to defend a flawed program. This is real world math that should not be ignored.

The adoption of the Holt series would represent the best choice on many levels and most importantly, makes the best use of the district’s financial resources and our students’ time.

Please, please, please encourage the Holt curriculum for our future students. Thank you.

Dear committee members;

I spent two hours comparing Discovering Algebra 1 and Holt Algebra1.

Actually, five minutes could be enough. Discovering Algebra 1 is a very good, almost ideal textbook. Holt Algebra1 is less than average one. They are just different animals. People, who highlight already bolded text and use eleven colors on the same page, cannot write any learning materials. However, maybe I missed something? I would appreciate the opportunity to hear any arguments in favor of Holt and discuss them.

So far I know only arguments against Discovering from Bellevue Reporter article (Bellevue battles... by J. Hicks, February, 20), and I’m afraid, there is a possibility of making wrong decision again, based on ideological reasons. Ten or so years ago district enthusiastically adapted methodologically naïve curriculum TERC, because of its inquire –based approach. Today district is about to reject excellent curriculum Discovering, because of its inquire-based approach.

Let’s forget about approaches. Put yourself in students’ shoes and open the textbook. Discovery tells you what to do right away, and, doesn’t matter, what knowledge, skills and abilities you have, you can do it. Each step is easy, accurately measured, friendly explained. If there is a possibility, that you see this or that word for first time, there is an explanation. You always know what you do and why. Material is very well structured, very well visually presented, clearly explained; information is chosen carefully.

This book communicates with students in the best possible way. This communication is always to the point, respectful, and, again, strictly measured. It provides students with invaluable advises. If you follow these advises, you learn how to read and, ultimately, how to learn.

The way, in which Discovering communicates with the students, helps them to develop general learning skills. If you worry about the learning gap – here is a partial (the problem is wider), but concrete and working solution. Working with Discovering is like working with wise, experienced, and friendly tutor. I would be happy to teach math with such tool - it makes almost all regular work for you and let you concentrate on the specific individual problems.

One of the most important skills out of these “general” is ability to follow directions. Discovering clearly pays specific attention to mastering this essential skill.

First sentence of the L. Tolstoy novel Anna Karenina says: Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way. The same is with math textbooks. Bad inquiry-based textbooks don’t pay attention to the fundamental knowledge and skills, especially to the basics of computation, confuse students and parents, demonstrate lack of common sense. Bad “traditional” textbooks don’t offer enough good and various activities and problems for the students, make entire process bored, and make gap between motivated and unmotivated or unprepared students wider. However, look how really good teachers work. They know that learning is an active process, but they also know that memorization and repetition is integral part of it. They are looking for any way to make abstract notions and models understandable, but they know that there is always a work, “traditional” work, there is no “regal way”, no magic, and there is always a border line, that you can’t cross in your experiments.

Good “anything” - based math textbook will look pretty much like traditional and become “traditional” with the time.

As I could see, looking at Discovering Algebra 1, this time is approaching. Discovering has everything that traditional textbook has. It has all math facts and procedures clearly presented. It has enough traditional exercises to master computational skills. Extremely important, that it goes with Spanish version. Looks like small thing, but it not only helps newcomers to learn math, it also helps them to learn English, and it helps to include Spanish-only speaking parents in learning process.

As I mentioned already, Discovering methodological apparatus helps students with any backgrounds to become a good learner. It builds universal learning skills, including reading skills. It is a real help for those, who don’t have strong command of reading.

The ultimate goal of new teaching approaches is to find and organize such activities that help every student to develop ability to operate with abstract objects and ideas, ability to think rationally. Sorry, I couldn't say it better. I didn't touch this part of Discovering, even though it is, in a way, a central part of it, and, from my point of view, it is done very well. It wormed my heart almost as much, as its methodological provision. However, it is highly speculative and special talk. I personally think, that these activities have huge developmental potential, but in this discussion my point is – Discovering has everything that Holt has, but it is written so much better, that here is, actually, nothing to compare. On the top of that, Discovering has big developmental potential in a very broad way.

Eighth grade is a little too late to develop basic learning and intellectual skills; maybe that's why you don't see it's effect right away. However, if there is a comparable curriculum for elementary and middle school math, and money to use, it will be very good idea to buy it.

Dear committee members! The article cites one District parent: it was failed experiment. I agree. Adapting raw experimental curriculum for entire District without critical attitude and special methodological work was a mistake. Public education is not supposed to be an experimental field. However, if you turn down good curriculum, because you had bad experience with bad one, you make another mistake. It will make all this experience useless and lessons don't learned. It will throw back our District for another 10-12 years.

Thank you for your time.

***,
***,

10+ years experience of being BSD parent, 15+ experience in teaching math and physics, 5 years experience of writing teaching materials, evaluating and implementing various projects in public education.

Dear Bellevue Math Adoption Committee -

I am a parent at Cherry Crest Elementary school and currently have a 2nd grader and 5th grader. Both of my children will be affected by your decision on the new high school math curriculum. As a highly involved parent and PTSA Assistant Treasurer of our school, most parents and teachers that I have spoken with prefer a more traditional approach to math. Given the two options in front of the district, I would prefer the Holt Math series.

We have been very pleased with the Math Expression curriculum used the past 1.5 years and appreciated the involvement in our school in the pilot study. Math Expressions has a good mix of story problems and traditional algorithms taught in the earlier grades. The reinforcement used throughout the concepts and in the nightly homework sheets seems to give each child more confidence in math. My older child struggled with the TERC approach to math and now with Math Expressions is towards the top of his class, plus math is now his favorite subject!

The Holt Math series should be selected for use in the Bellevue School District (BSD). The Holt Series more closely aligns with BSD's mission to provide "students a top-of-the-line college preparatory education so that they can enter and succeed in the college or university of their choice." Holt has also been recommended as the top choice by the Washington Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

All of the people I know who are strong in math and work in either computer science or engineering have sung the praises of traditional math. I have many friends who work at Microsoft who do interviews for future candidates. They have seen a big difference in the newer interviewees who have come from a traditional math background and the ones who have come from a "softer" math curriculum. Please do not adopt the Discovery Math curriculum for our students. My son is very strong in math and science and hopes to go into an engineering field when he grows older. I fear that he may have a real struggle going into that field in the future if the district chooses the "softer" math.

Please let us properly prepare our students to go out and be successful in the future.

Dear Math Adoption Committee,

I am a math teacher at O'Dea High School, but more importantly, I have two children (ages 8 and 11) in the Bellevue School District. I have looked at both the Holt and Discovering math series, and wish to inform you that I think that it is VERY important that you

adopt the Holt series. I teach both Math and Physics, and the Discovery series would leave students totally unprepared for my physics class, and by extension, unprepared for the mathematics expected for entering college.

As a secondary consideration, one of my children is very gifted at mathematical concepts, but lags behind substantially in verbal expression and writing. I would like him to be able to excel in at least one area of school, and the approach of the Discovering series would limit this.

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing you from three perspectives: First I am the parent of two boys in the Bellevue schools. Second, I have been an instructor in the psychology department of the University of Washington, teaching both introductory classes, advanced classes and graduate courses. And finally, I have just been appointed to the financial committee charged with helping the Bellevue School District find ways to use the increasingly scarce financial resources in the best way possible.

As a parent, I am very worried that my children will be totally unprepared for college if the district adopts the Discovering Mathematics Series. While this may be a way that a few students can learn, the vast majority of students need clear explanations, lots of practice, help from parents, and a curriculum designed to be sequential which prepares students for the next step in mathematical understanding. The Holt textbook, which may not be perfect, I suppose, is certainly a huge improvement over the Discovery Series texts. The experience in Lake Washington School District and Seattle Schools is clearly that the Discovery method of teaching Mathematics is inferior to the more traditional method represented by the Holt text. As a parent, when reading the Discovery text, I was unable to locate examples which were clearly worked so that I could help my youngsters learn any part of the material that they had not learned in class. The methods did not match anything I had learned either in K-12 or later in College and graduate school. I would find it very frustrating, as would my boys, to have to try to help them.

As an instructor at the university level, I have dealt with incoming students who literally could not handle simple algebra needed to understand means and standard deviations. If they were unprepared for this simple math, how much less prepared were they for the math needed for college chemistry, physics and engineering! Students literally dropped the introductory psychology course because it has the most basic statistics included in the curriculum. Needless to say, one has no basis for understanding the worth of an experiment if one can not understand such things as degrees of freedom and p values. These don't require much math, just 9th grade algebra, but these students did not feel confident about it. I know of many students who changed their major from engineering or science to history or English because they were unprepared for math, giving up potentially rewarding careers in medicine, and science and engineering fields for the uncertainties of getting a job with a liberal arts degree.

As someone entrusted to make fiscally sound recommendations for the district, I have to say that buying text books that are written to teach in novel and unproven ways and may well prove to be "a flash in the pan" is not a good idea. Sticking with proven pedagogic methods (and those endorsed by the committee we paid to review them) ensures that the text books that the district purchases, and both of these represent a very significant financial investment, will be usable for a long time. Whereas, if we buy the newest "great idea" it is far more likely that we will abandon it for the next "great idea," a few years down the road. Finally, the worst use of the district's scarce resources is defending a lawsuit such as the one the Seattle school district just lost. I have no doubt that there would be a similar law suit filed here. Even if we won, the cost of such a suit would be a terrible waste of the district's resources.

Sincerely,

I am writing this because I learned tonight that there was a survey form sent out regarding the pilot program for the 9th grade using the different textbooks under consideration by the school board. I never saw the survey form and was unaware my son was involved in the pilot program until a couple of weeks ago.

If I had the survey, I would have been unable to fill it out, because I would have been in no position to compare his responses to the different texts, because I was unaware of the program.

So, please do not base any decision based on responses to the survey, there must be many other parents who were similarly unaware of the program / survey.

If you are to make a decision based on parent input, please send out a survey asking for opinions regarding the Holt texts and the Discovering texts, extend the process, and get real input.

Having looked at both texts, Holt addresses and presents math in a manner that we have desperately wanted for years and years. It has clear examples, supporting information, multiple problem sets, review process, and as I understand it, an excellent on-line support system.

The Holt text makes it possible for parents to really assist their kids with their homework, the Discovering material, while better than what they have been using in recent years, is still a continuation of what has not worked in the past.

My wife and I have struggled to help our kids with math the last 8 years, and have been frustrated beyond belief over the lack of information available in the material they have had to work with. We have spent thousands of dollars getting tutoring for them, money we didn't have, borrowing it, to improve their skills.

The tutoring seemed to us to be mostly old-fashioned drill and learn, present concepts, review, and apply, all of which could have been provided by the District, if the proper curriculum had been available. We know of many other parents who have also spent thousands on outside tutoring, so we are not an unusual case. Outside tutoring has been boosting scores over the past decade - the teachers in the District, are for the most part, quite good, but the math curriculum has been impossible for parents to work with.

Please choose the Holt textbooks, I am sure a careful review by the board will see that it is clearly superior to the Discovering books. Put an end to the inquiry method of learning and move on to the future with solid, substantial, and supportable math curriculum.

As one who has followed the math textbook adoption process for the past year, I have noticed numerous things which make me very uncomfortable with the approach used. The following issues lead me to believe that the process was designed with the expectation or desire that Discovering would be selected:

- Teachers were selected for the committee because they were known to prefer investigations math. Relatively few dissenters were included in the committee, and those who dissenters had to insist that they be included.
- The committee broke up into groups of four, replicating the groups that students are assigned to in math class, which implies that the process of discussing whatever topic was assigned is the best method of arriving at an optimal solution. Further, by breaking the committee into smaller groups for discussion, the entire group didn't benefit from the ideas of all of the participants. This technique, known as the "delphi" method, deprives the entire group of shared knowledge. What evidence is there that the decisions made were better because of this approach?
- The parent math information nights held in October and November also used the delphi method. Parents who attended meetings at all of the high schools observed significant differences in the presentations by the speakers, as well as in the questions from the audience and replies to them. Parents who attended only one of the sessions missed significant information that was presented at the other sessions.
- Questions on the parent feedback form provided in the high school libraries were designed to elicit responses that favor investigations math, such as a question about whether the text encourages student to be active learners. This is a value specific to reform math.
- Parent members of the math textbook adoption committee were recruited and identified very late in the process, long after the two finalist textbook series were identified. If parent input were seriously desired, the invitation to apply for the committee would have gone out at the outset of the process. Further, these parents were not provided with advice or resources to do the stated job that they were recruited for. They were not told how to send email to all parents in the school district to communicate information about the textbook adoption process. It would have been very easy to help them set up a blog so that they could have shared information on the textbook adoption proceedings, but this didn't happen.

Hello adoption committee members,

I was not able to attend the math info session this evening but got some feedback from a neighbor who did attend. This comment... "It was very sad *and shocking* to hear many Newport High parents speak at the meeting to say their kids are failing at math and

will not be able to consider careers that rely on an advanced level of math" was an all-too-familiar comment I've heard over the years from many parents in my neighborhood. In fact, I will never forget one mother breaking down in tears recalling her daughter's utter shock when she failed the math portion of the SAT so miserably, but of course was a A math student at Newport HS.

I have a 6th grader who will never believe he is good in math. He has been through TERC most of his elementary life, and never, ever got it. We supplemented, tutored, encouraged and worked with him, but the damage has been done. How? He loves science and says he'd like to become a scientist, but then says he probably won't because of math. It sounds absurd to us adults but this is what he believes about himself. I hope, for his sake, and for all those exasperated tax-paying parents in this district, including myself, that you will choose a math curriculum that will seriously prepare our children for the expectations of math skill and knowledge beyond the Bellevue school district. Please choose Holt. No more fuzzy math please.

Dear BSD Math Adoption Committee,

In your evaluation of the two math curriculae presently being considered, my NHS freshman, taking sophomore level math, would like to share her input. First, she trialed Holt. She loved it. It was the first time in nine years that she has experienced organized, step by step, accurate, and specific instruction. It is the first time in nine years that with that instruction she has been given enough significant exercises and problems to solve that she could gain some mastery. As a parent, I can tell you that this is mastery that she has sorely lacked. Though she is ahead one year in math and is a straight A student, she is lacking in basic, everyday math skills. These are skills that every single NHS graduate will need in almost any job and certainly in their lives, skills involving percentages, fractions, decimals, ratios...that will allow them to work with P&L statements as even a low level manager must, evaluate investments as adults saving for college or retirement, understand a car or home loan they are considering. Even the top NHS math students do not have these skills.

The second point my daughter would like to share is that it has consistently been her experience throughout the investigative math years that in reality there is very little, if any, investigation going on in table groups. Her very frustrating experience has been that she does all the work, the other members of the table group grab her paper and copy her answers. She is forced to continue this because the group grade counts. Additionally, it is extremely frustrating for her because she is having to do all this math while very distracted by all the non-math talk going on all around her and the other table group members continually asking her what they should write down, or trying to pull her paper away. The investigative work is a great concept in theory, but in reality it is a disservice to the majority of students who not only do not participate in the process but could have been using that time to work on many problems, gaining mastery. It is also a disservice to my daughter who does poor work in groups because she is very distracted, now absolutely hates working in groups, feels frustrated and negative about math, a subject she likes, and also is never given the opportunity to gain mastery of a subject. I have spoken to fifteen other students that are a year ahead in math and 100% of them have the exact same experience and feelings. Please talk to these students about what is really happening on a daily basis in the classroom.

I was walking with a friend on Monday. She received a text during our walk from her freshman NHS student who is also ahead a year in math, asking to please be picked up early from school. This student had already consulted with some other freshman about math class that day and heard that nothing was going on, it was boring, and so wanted to just come home and skip math because this student had more productive things to do with that block of time. As I inquire about my daughters various classes each day when she comes home, I invariably get the same type of response from her. The third and last point my daughter would like to share is that she has found math slow and unchallenging at school. It seems to me that the BSD is failing the average and below average math students by not graduating them having mastered just the basic skills they will need, and has failed the top math students because they are bored, unchallenged, but also lacking those same skills.

We are a very fortunate family. We have the financial resources and time to provide math instruction outside of school. Both of my daughters study Singapore math at home. I pay for my older daughter to study this curriculum with a private tutor once a week. Though she is in 10th grade math at NHS, she is just starting 9th grade math in the Singapore curriculum. She has been doing this curriculum since second grade. My younger daughter started in kindergarten as I already, by that time, knew how deficient the BSD curriculum was. I have watched over the years at the continually widening gap between what my older daughter gets at BSD and what Singapore is covering. The gap became startling in 7th grade and has only increased, even though she is a year behind in this Singapore curriculum. She is, however, very challenged and engaged with the Singapore curriculum, something she has never once been with the BSD curriculum. What is she able to get out of this outside math study? Not too much. Going just once a week and having just a half hour to an hour a week of homework just doesn't cut it, yet I cannot stop. I feel morally obligated to do whatever I can to make up for what she is not getting at school. This is a child that has excellent math aptitude yet is totally unchallenged in math at school. As a parent, I care about all students and fellow parents. I am so heartsick for those that don't have the time,

knowledge, or money to help their students in math. It truly pains me. I started a math club at Somerset Elementary to try to help more students than just my own. I coached Math Olympiad for two years to try to help others. I worked in the classrooms during math instruction to give extra help to students. As a note, my daughter's tutor, a single woman whose only job is that of a tutor, is fully booked with NHS students and has just remodeled her entire home.

I really don't like writing this email, but as a good parent, I have no choice but to do the right thing for not only my children, but all children. Listen to the students, the parents, the parents working in the math and science fields, the UW professors. They know. You have found parents to be more than passionate about this issue. The sustained magnitude of this passion reflects the magnitude of the error made years ago by BSD in choosing a math curriculum that has failed our children. Please begin the process of rectifying that decision by choosing Holt.
